



CHARLES RIVER ALLIANCE OF BOATERS NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2021

SAFETY FIRST !!!

While COVID continues to be a public health issue, it's encouraging to see people back on the water: rowers, sailors, paddlers, the Boston Duck Tour boats and the Charles River sightseeing boats.

I'd like to encourage everyone to be safe out on the water.

- If you're out before sunrise or after sunset, don't forget your lights.
- Before you get on the water, refresh your memory of the rowing traffic plan.
- Rowing coaches should follow their rowers through the designated arch and not pass through an adjacent arch.
- Be mindful of what's happening near you while on the water.

It takes all of us to work together to keep the river a safe place.

ENGINE CUTOFF SWITCHES REQUIRED

A new federal law now requires that engine cutoff switches (ECOS) on vessels less than 26 feet in length and without an enclosed cabin. When used properly, the ECOS turns off the motor if the operator gets thrown from the helm or tiller. This can happen if the boat hits something solid, a big wave, or wake in the water. Runaway boats are very dangerous. They often start to circle, endangering river users including their operator, who may be in the water. For safety, CRAB encourages their use on all motorized vessels. More information is available from the [US Coast Guard](#) and the [Safe Boating Council](#).

CRAB ANNUAL DUES

The Board of CRAB has approved the creation of annual dues of \$150 for each boathouse and marina on the river. This is an important step to provide CRAB with a reliable source of funds so that we can operate. It also reinforces the concept that CRAB is an organization of boathouses and clarifies the definition of membership within CRAB. CRAB will be sending out invoices shortly.

CRAB COMMUNICATION

One of the more important things that CRAB does is communicate to the river community. Prior to COVID, CRAB sent weekly reminders about upcoming events. As activity on the river rebounds, this will resume. We also send out notices about projects that might impact users of the river. Some recent examples are notices about the Allston I-90 project, the North Allston Storm Water Drain Extension, and the DCR's River Vegetation Management Program for mitigating invasive plants.

For people that would like to get our announcements directly, enroll in our [public list-server](#). For contacts and point persons at each boathouse, marina, and program, CRAB uses a private list-server. CRAB also maintains a [web site](#), an [event calendar](#), and a presence on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

CRAB can be contacted either through one of its [board members](#) or at CharlesRiverAllianceofBoaters@gmail.com.

GET YOUR EVENTS ON THE CALENDAR

Has your club got an event or race coming this summer? Please post it on the [CRAB Calendar](#). This is particularly important if your event will affect other users, such as rowing events that will cause traffic diversion or stoppage, even if temporary. Such advance notice helps others to schedule their activities around your event.

ALLSTON I-90 MULTIMODAL PROJECT

The result of a public comment period in October 2020 was that more than 90% of the comments supported some form of an at-grade reconstruction of the Mass Pike and Soldiers Field Road. [CRAB](#) and others clearly stated that the at-grade option as proposed needed to be changed and improved. The overwhelming public opinion was at odds with MassDOT's preferred design to build a modified viaduct. So far, an improved at-grade design has not been put forward. Change may be coming with a new DOT Secretary and project engineer. A recent meeting of the I-90 Task Force signalled a potential reboot of the public process with Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT State Highway Administrator, asking for feedback on the task force process. It remains to be seen where this project is headed and we'll keep watching to ensure that it doesn't adversely affect the river and its users.

INVASIVE PLANTS

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has announced a River Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) to remove invasive plants from the Charles River Basin. Responding to this plan put forth in a report generated by Weston and Sampson, the DCR has hired Solitude Lake Management as the main contractor, and Weston and Sampson as a subcontractor, to treat invasive plants with herbicide this summer. Permitting is currently underway. Future discussions between CRAB, CRWA, and the DCR will identify priority areas to be treated. The DCR is also being encouraged to conduct a survey of the Upper Charles this summer so that invasive plants can be removed there also.

NORTH ALLSTON DRAIN PROJECT

The Boston Water and Sewer Commission filed an Environmental Notification Form regarding a project to build a new storm water drain into the Charles River between River St. and Western Ave. CRAB submitted a [response](#) to the ENF in which we ask for more information about the potential impact of this new storm water drain on the river and its users.

DEPTH CHART AT MIT ROWING

As many of you know, the Harold W. Pierce Boat House at MIT has been undergoing renovation. While the renovation is not quite finished, and entry is limited due to COVID, we got a sneak peek with pictures of the Charles River Depth Chart mounted on the wall at the top of the stairs. It looks fantastic. A shout out to Tony Kilbridge, MIT Director of Rowing, Peterson Architects / Jeff Peterson, DS Parker Design, Inc. / Debra Parker, and MIT Sea Grant Program / Michael Sacarny, Madonna Yoder, and Ben Bray.



CRAB OFFICERS

Aleks Zosuls : President
Carl Zimba : Vice President
Rob Brawdgers : Treasurer
Karen Chenausky : Secretary
Mike Miller : Trustee
Kate Chang : Trustee
Mark Jacobson : Trustee

UPDATE FROM THE CRWA

The Charles River Watershed Association is our strongest ally to maintain and improve the environmental quality of the river. In this issue of the CRAB Newsletter, we give Emily Norton, the Executive Director of the CRWA, space to give our river community an update on their activities.

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We are delighted to have CRAB as a partner in so much of our work, including previously mentioned initiatives like the I-90 project, invasive removal, and the ongoing work surrounding the Allston storm drain. Thanks to the hard work of our network of friends and advocates like CRAB and its members, it is deeply satisfying for us to see a huge benefit of our work in the many people who can now safely recreate on and along the Charles River.

One additional project in which we think CRAB members will be interested is our "Cut the Crap" Campaign, which aims for the elimination of the remaining CSOs (Combined Sewer Overflows) into the Charles River.

The Boston Harbor Lawsuit, which led to the creation of MWRA and the Long-Term CSO Control Plan, brought about a significant cleanup of the river, but that cleanup is still far from complete. Tens of millions of gallons of wastewater still get dumped into the Lower Basin every year and that volume will only grow by orders of magnitude as climate change continues to bring increasingly intense weather events to our communities.

On this issue, CRWA's position is clear; as we wrote to MassDEP in early 2019, "the ultimate goal should be nothing less than complete or functional elimination of the CSO discharges to the Lower Charles River/Charles River Basin."

To make this goal a reality, CRWA is currently taking the following steps.

- Conducting a close review of MWRA's ongoing Long Term Control Plan assessment phase in order to gain a complete understanding of how the CSO system is operating today, which CSOs are overflowing more than they should, and which are overflowing so infrequently they may

possibly be eliminated;

- Exercising close scrutiny of MWRA's water quality modeling work to independently verify the former's statements regarding impacts of CSOs on the river;
- Participating in the development of an updated CSO Control Plan with MWRA and the City of Cambridge;
- Advocating to MassDEP that MWRA install green infrastructure projects to the extent necessary to achieve functional elimination of CSOs;
- Ensuring that climate change is a key consideration in the next phase of CSO planning aimed at preventing an increase in discharges.

As the Long Term Control Plan comes to an end, CRWA is also concerned that MassDEP will decide to reclassify the Charles River Lower Basin as a "Class B CSO" river. This classification would be a huge step backwards because it would lower the water quality standards that apply to the river and further entrench combined sewer overflows. In fact, a 1998 MassDEP memo states that the department "anticipates that the segment [of the Charles] will eventually be designated Class B CSO because the Department has not identified a means to completely eliminate CSOs in the Charles River."

In keeping with past commitments to working toward a clean and healthy Charles, CRWA will be devoting substantial technical and advocacy expertise to helping MassDEP identify the path to functionally eliminating CSOs.

- Emily Norton, Executive Director, CRWA

